

Graduate Division of Religion
Course Atlas
Spring 2011

RLE 700R: Engaging Moral Dimensions of Religion and Theology—Methodological Challenges
Elizabeth M. Bounds **Tuesdays, 2:00-5:00**

Content: This exploratory seminar focuses upon some key methodological issues for religious and theological studies that arise in the study of moral experience in religious contexts. These include:

- what counts as “religion” or “theology”
- “experience” and “agency” as individual/relational/structured-determined
- nature of practice (bodies and minds)
- the role of institutions, structures and movements
- the relation of the descriptive and the normative
- the requirements of interdisciplinary work
- the location of the scholar and her/his commitments (religious, moral, and/or political)

During the first half of the course, we will read a variety of theoretical texts, In the second half of the course, we will read several texts in both religious and theological studies exploring forms of religious experience/engagement, discussing how these texts do/do not engage these questions and how these (non)engagements are connected to methodological choices.

Texts: Theoretical texts may include: James Gustafson, *Intersections*; Daniele Hervieu-Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*; Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and Scholars that Study Them*; Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered*; Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*; Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice*, along with essays by/excerpts from Talal Asad, Pierre Bourdieu, Sarah Coakley, James Jasper, Bruno Latour, Russ McCutcheon, Todd Whitmore. Example texts may include: Monica Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology*; Thomas Csordas, *The Sacred Self*; Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*; Matthew Engelke and Matt Tomlinson, eds., *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity*; Marla Frederick, *From Sunday to Sunday*; Mary Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church*; Daniel Groody, *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*; Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*; Meredith McGuire, *Lived Religion*; Clemens Sedmack, *Doing Local Theology*

Particulars: Written work will include 2 discussion papers (with seminar leadership) and a choice of possible projects , such as mock examination questions, a portfolio of book reviews, a research project proposal, or a research paper.

RLE 732: History of Christian Theological Ethics
Tim Jackson **Thursdays, 2:30-5:30**

This course provides a critical look at a broad range of Christian moral theologies and theologians up through the middle of the Nineteenth Century. It is meant to be a companion course to RLE 730, "Contemporary Theological Ethics," which looks exclusively at Twentieth and Twenty-first Century figures. We begin with St. Augustine and read selectively from Thomas Aquinas, Julian of Norwich, Martin Luther, Hans Denck, and Søren Kierkegaard. Diversity of perspective will be provided, in part, by secondary essays – feminist, pragmatist, liberationist, deconstructionist, or etc. – on these figures reported on by students.

Some of the enduring questions that concern us are:

- How are we to understand human nature and its virtues and vices?
- What specifically is the relation between Christ-like love, personal prudence, and social justice?
- What is the relation between God's providence and human freedom?
- What is the nature of sin and the place of Jesus Christ in overcoming it?
- Is the Kingdom of God, a.k.a. "eternal life," open in principle to everyone or only to the elect few?

RLE 790R Seminar in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding

Edward Queen

Wednesdays, 9:00-12:00

RLHB 790R Temples and Priests in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism

Bill Gilders

Tuesdays, 1:00 – 4:00

S221 Callaway

Content: This course explores "cult places" (shrines and temples) and their specialist personnel (priests and other functionaries) in ancient Israel and early Judaism (up to the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism). Attention will be given to both textual and material evidence related to cult places and priesthoods. A particular focus of the course will be on the larger cultural contexts in which Israelite and Jewish cult places and priesthoods emerged and functioned. Some examples of topics to be explored: ideologies of temple-space in the Ancient Near East; priestly "houses" and rival claims to priestly status; the Tabernacle in Exodus and Leviticus; Solomon's Jerusalem temple; ideas about a heavenly temple; rivals and alternatives to the Jerusalem temple (Samaritan, Elephantine; Leontopolis); early Christian attitudes toward the Jerusalem temple and its priesthood; rabbinic images and "memories" of the Second Temple.

Particulars: The course will be conducted as a seminar, with students leading sessions. The course grade will be based on seminar participation and a substantial "research report."

Texts: All students will need a copy of the Hebrew Bible. Most secondary readings will be available through reserves collections. One book is *recommended* for purchase:

Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Eisenbrauns, 1985/1995)

RLHT 735 Global Religious Realities in US History

Gary Laderman

Thursdays, 12:00-3:00

Content: This history of religion in America has been and continues to be embedded in global networks of peoples and ideas crossing national boundaries, of experiences and aspirations creating transnational orientations, and of rituals and mythologies transcending local communities. This vision of religious activity and commitments embedded in worldwide patterns of social migration and cultural calibration is an important corrective to the conventional view of American religious history. In other words, religion in America is not simply a domestic matter, unfolding seamlessly through time after the creation of a Constitution which singled out religious freedom as a basic human right and in isolation from religious histories unfolding around the rest of the world.

This seminar will break through the narrow and parochial understanding of religion in contemporary society by exploring an alternative perspective. Instead of remaining blinded by national sentiments tied to notions of exceptionalism and chosenness, this seminar will illuminate the more ordinary international realities throughout history shaping religious life in the United States; instead of accepting conventional wisdom about the unique

role of democracy and individual rights, this book will emphasize the power struggles and dynamic tensions in American history that are elements commonly found when multiple religious traditions and cultures intersect and interact in various social contexts; and instead of simply segregating religion into discrete units (for example, Jews, Christian, Muslims, and so on) and charting their historical trajectories in America, students will be asked to present a more complex picture of the historical and cultural forces that often blur the lines between religions, and create new religious amalgamations which can only be understood in a global context.

Texts will likely include the following:

Alba, Richard D., Albert J. Raboteau, and Josh DeWind, eds. *Immigration and Religion in America: Comparative and Historical Perspectives*. New York, 2009.

Eck, Diana L, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*. San Francisco, 2001.

Juergensmeyer, Mark, ed. *Global Religions: An Introduction*. New York, 2003.

Levitt, Peggy. *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape*. New York, 2007.

Prothero, Stephen R, ed. *A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America*. Chapel Hill, 2006.

Richardson, E. *Strangers in this Land: Pluralism and the Response to Diversity in the United States*. New York, 1988.

Robbins, Thomas, and Dick Anthony. *In Gods We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism in America*. 2nd ed., New Brunswick, 1990.

RLHT 736: Law Governing Genocide: the case of the Holocaust: A Seminar
Deborah Lipstadt and Michel Broyde **Wednesdays, 2:00 -5:00 pm ***

* **Note:** the first session of the class is 1/12 and the final one is 4/15. That's one week early in order to fit the Law School calendar.

Description: This course will focus on the law of genocide and crimes against humanity from both a legal and a historical perspective using the Holocaust as one paradigmatic example. Special attention will be given to the Nuremberg Tribunals and the Eichmann Trial in order to determine how they helped shaped/influence subsequent genocide related trials. Students will be expected to write papers on the law of genocide within the context of the Holocaust or on the law of genocide within the context of other examples including not but limited to: Rwanda tribunals, Cambodian trials, former Yugoslavia, and South African Truth and Reconciliation.

Administrative: Location: Law School Gambrell Hall 1F

Enrollment: 24 students from the Law School and Laney Graduate School. In addition Emory College undergrads and students from other schools, e.g. Candler Theology and Goizetta, will be permitted to enroll by permission of the instructors]

Grading Policies: Each Student will be graded based on the scale of his base academic institution.

Class Requirements:

Regular attendance, coming to class prepared to actively participate in meaningful discussion. Failure to regularly attend and actively participate will result in a penalty.

Class presentation of approximately 30 minutes. The presentation will be based on each student's research paper. Students will assign readings to the class prior to their presentation. [If two students are doing similar topics they can to present jointly. The papers are to be prepared individually.] 25% of class grade

Research paper of approximately 25 pages. 75% of class grade.

Topics to be covered in class:

1. Status of Law of Genocide pre WWI: what was picture in 1939? How did international law function? How did Raphael Lemkin manage to get law passed?
2. What were the key insights of the Nuremberg Trial generally? What changed as a result of Nuremberg and why is it important?
3. Who was systematically murdered? What were the differences in treatment of the following groups: Jews, Gypsies, Handicapped, gays, political dissidents
4. How does Nuremberg deal with the persecution of each of these groups? Does it see them as being treated the same? Does it differentiate? If so, how?
5. How is Eichmann trial the same/different from Nuremberg:
 - a. Kidnapping issue
 - b. Victims' testimony [particularly of victims who have no direct connection to Eichmann]
 - c. 1st hand proof of crimes vs. specific role of defendant in connection to these crimes.
 - d. Show trial? Not a show trail in classical Soviet system but show trial in sense that witnesses brought forth to provide highly prejudicial testimony
6. Auschwitz trial: 1963
7. A Reversal of Positions: David Irving v. Penguin UK and Deborah Lipstadt
8. Nuremberg's Successors:
9. A Reversal of Positions: David Irving v. Penguin UK and Deborah Lipstadt
 - a. Dumjanjuk v. the United States
 - b. Mai Lai
 - c. Rwanda tribunals
 - d. Former Yugoslavia
 - e. Truth and Reconciliation/Botha testimony

RLL 701B Akkadian

Jacob Wright

Mondays, 2:30-4:00

Content: The course is a basic study of the Akkadian language spanning two semesters. At the conclusion of the second semester, students will be able to read transliterated literary texts in Standard Babylonian with the help of a dictionary. By way of background, the students will encounter the basic principles of Sumerian grammar. Students will also be equipped to navigate peripheral dialects of Akkadian.

Texts:

Black, George, and Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*

Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*

Huehnergard, *A Key to a Grammar of Akkadian*

Miller and Ship, *An Akkadian Handbook*

Particulars: Students will demonstrate aptitude through regular in-class and take-home quizzes as well as a comprehensive final exam. Prior work with another Semitic language, particularly Classical Hebrew, is required.

RLNT 745 Greco-Roman Backgrounds

Michael Brown

Fridays, 1:00-4:00

RLNT 780/RLR 725: Rhetorical Power of Religious Literature

Vernon K. Robbins

Mondays, 1:30-4:30

Religious literature persuades both by evoking pictures in the mind and by advancing reasoning supported by common experiences. Recent studies of human thinking, based on language usage, brain function, body gesture, social location, and personal networking, provide new resources for understanding the rhetorical nature of speech and writing. Using these resources, rhetorical analysts and interpreters have gained new status and importance across all disciplines of study in the sciences, literature, history, philosophy, and the arts. Religion, religious speech, and religious writings are central players in this resurgence of interest in rhetoric as a discipline of study and a guide for analysis, interpretation, and constructive thinking, writing, and action.

This seminar will focus on the dynamic relation of rhetography (communication that evokes pictures in the mind) and rhetology (communication that is explicitly argumentative) in religious speech, writing, ritual, and community. Participants in the seminar will read both ancient and modern primary and secondary sources as guides to rhetorical theory, analysis, interpretation, and construction. Individual participants may choose between rhetography and rhetology as a major focus, but all will be asked to interrelate ways in which religious speech, writing, and/or modern technology both evoke pictures in the mind and use argumentation for purposes of persuading audiences.

Texts:

George Lakoff, *Don't Think of An Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*

Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*

George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*

Chaim Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric*

Chaim Perelman & Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*

Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*

Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*

Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse, Vol. 1*

Particulars: In addition to regular reports on the readings, participants will write short papers as a means to progress toward the successful writing of a major research paper. Multiple power points and some pod casts will be available to assist the process of teaching and learning.

RLPC 710G Deconstructing "Sacred Violence:" A Phenomenology of Religion and Culture

Thee Smith

Thursdays, 3:00-6:00

Content: ‘A next major step in conflict resolution is the bilateral discovery of injuries that each group has perpetrated on the other.’ In such terms Marc Gopin offers a prescription for achieving a more ‘prosocial’ or edenic “future of world religions, violence, and peacemaking” in his book, *Between Eden and Armageddon* (Oxford, 2000; p.129). More descriptively René Girard also invites a “bilateral discovery” among groups who have perpetrated injuries on each other. “By taking sides,” Girard argues, such groups “inevitably ignore the true center of gravity of the process—the scapegoat mechanism, still religiously transfigured” (*Job: The Victim of His People*; Stanford, 1987, p. 59).

This course provides resources for pursuing both Gopin’s prescriptive approach in the field of conflict resolution, and Girard’s descriptive contribution to a phenomenology of religion and culture. Beginning with phenomenological description we will explore how choosing sides between perpetrators and victims displays ignorance of deeper cultural dynamics; deep structures by means of which the victim-perpetrator polarity becomes sacralized or “religiously transfigured.” Precisely such religious figuration—demonizing perpetrators, sanctifying victims, etc.—renders systemic violence so virulent and intractable. Deconstructing that pernicious complexity system has become one of the most decisive projects of our postmodern era. While introducing students to phenomenology of religion as a discipline, this course also provides analytical approaches and research opportunities for that larger millennial project.

Texts:

Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads*, Crossroad, 1996

Riane Eisler, *The Chalice & the Blade: Our History Our Future*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1988

Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking*, Oxford Univ. Press, 2002

Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, (3rd ed.) 1990

James Williams, ed. *The Girard Reader*, Herder & Herder, 1997

Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment & Resistance in a World of Domination*, Augsburg Fortress, 1992

Packet: Phenomenology of Religion (Heiler, Otto, Smart, Spiegelberg, G. van der Leeuw, etc.)

Web Sources (www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/smith.html):

- ["Rescuing Our Faith From Sacred Violence" \(Parts 1 & 4\)](#)
- ["Rescuing Our Faith From Sacred Violence" \(Parts 2-4\)](#)

Particulars:

- (1) Two class presentations on required readings;
- (2) Midterm practicum, fieldwork, or media presentation (sample practicums, ethnographic and multimedia resources available in course);
- (3) Final term paper incorporating elements of the above and major themes of the course.

RLR 700R: Study of Religious Practices and Practical Theology

Thomas Long

Fridays, 9:00-12:00

This course explores the conversation between two sometimes independent, sometimes overlapping projects: the academic study of religious practices and the activity of doing practical theology. This exploration involves examining such questions as,

-- What is a practice? How do religious practices relate to the texts, artifacts, and other materials of religious life and thought?

-- How are practices lived? How do communities of faith sustain, extend, and teach the practices of their traditions?

- By what means and methods do communities of faith think about, assess, and seek renewal or transformation of their practices? How do practices relate to the lived theology of communities of faith?
- How are practices most usefully studied? What methods (e.g., sociology, ethnography, performance studies, ritual analysis) best illuminate the content and role of religious practices?
- What is practical theology? How does practical theology, particularly in Christian traditions, proceed in critical reflection on practices in conversation with the heritage of practices and contemporary cultural contexts?
- What are the implications of the study and interpretation of religious practices for the formation of leadership in religious traditions?

The course is a seminar. Students will engage a broad variety of relevant readings, will make presentations on these readings, and are expected to participate fully in discussions. Each student will conduct a limited exercise in field research and will then develop a final presentation and paper comprising the study of a religious practice in a particular context.

This seminar is open to all students and required of all Concentrators in Religious Practices and Practical Theology.

RLSR 700 Sources of the Self: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives (cross-listed with MESAS 570)
Vincent Cornell **Mondays, 4:00-7:00**

Course Overview:

The inquiry into human nature and the meaning of the self is one of the key questions in the history of philosophy and religious thinking alike. On the one hand it constitutes the subject matter of one of the primary fields of research in philosophy, namely, philosophical anthropology. On the other hand, the notion of the meaning of the self lies at the core of some of the most fundamental questions and concepts of religious thinking, including: the relation between the human and the divine, the problem of identity, and the relation between religion, ethics, and social norms.

This course is a comparative study of how the questions of self and selfhood have been approached by key philosophical and religious traditions. Through this survey we will investigate how philosophy has influenced religious and spiritual insights into human nature and how it has been influenced by religion in turn. In this vein we will touch on the longstanding question of the relation between faith and reason, particularly with regard to questions of human nature. Our comparative approach will be both thematic and historical. It will be thematic inasmuch as we will trace the main themes pertaining to the way the meaning of the self has been addressed in philosophical and religious thought. It will also be historical inasmuch as it will trace how these themes have been depicted in various religions and by key religious and philosophical thinkers.

We will start with Greek antiquity and late antiquity; in this vein we will focus on the three key schools: the Platonic, the Aristotelian and the harmonization of both in Neo-Platonism. We will then turn to medieval Islamic thought at the height of Islamic civilization. We will investigate the approaches of three mainstream schools in the history of Islamic thought to the question of human nature: Sufism, Philosophy, and Theology (*kalam*). Next we will turn to Advaita (Non-Duality) Vedanta Hinduism, where we will study the concept of the soul-self (*atman*). Following this we will study the concept of non-self (*anatman*) in Buddhism. For our final traditional perspective we will examine Native American notions of soul and self among Native American cultures. We will conclude the semester by comparing traditional notions of the self against concepts of the self developed by two influential figures of contemporary Western philosophy: Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger.

Texts used for the course will include some or all of the following:

1. Selections from Plato's *Republic and Timaeus*
2. Selections from Aristotle's *De Anima, Physics and Metaphysics*
3. Selections from Plotinus' *Enneads* (especially Ennead I)
4. Selections from the works of Harith al-Muhasibi
5. Selections from Avicenna's *Book of the Soul* from his philosophical encyclopedia *al-Shifā'* (Book of Healing), *States of the Soul*, and *Remarks and Admonitions*
6. Selections from Ibn 'Arabi's *Meccan Revelations & The Bezels of Wisdom*
7. Selections from the works of Ibn Sab'in of Ricote
8. Swami Nikhilananda, *Self-Knowledge: Shankara's Atmabodha*
9. James Duerlinger, *Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons*
10. Selections from John R. Farella, *The Main Stalk: A Synthesis of Navajo Philosophy*
11. Selections from Miguel León-Portilla, *Native Mesoamerican Spirituality*
12. Selections from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason, Critique of Practical Reason, and Critique of Judgment*
13. Selections from Heidegger's *Being and Time* and *Problems of Phenomenology* plus: *Letter on Humanism, Poetically Man Dwells, The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking, and The Thing*

Grading:

A. Midterm Power-Point presentation on a premodern theory of the self (35% of the grade)

B. Final paper (40% of the grade)

1. 15-20 pages in length for undergraduates
2. 20-30 pages in length for graduate students

C. Class participation (25% of the grade)

Regular attendance and constructive class participation are required. 25% of your final grade will be based on the quality and quantity of contributions to class discussions. A final word about grades: You must complete all of the course requirements by the end of the semester in order to receive a passing grade. Incompletes will be granted only in cases of actual emergency.

RLTS 700 Figures of Interpretation: Augustine and Spinoza (cross-listed with CPLT 751)

Jill Robbins

Wednesdays, 1:00-4:00

Content: This seminar is concerned with questions in hermeneutics and the relationship between biblical, philosophical and literary theories of interpretation. It centers on two figures central to the history of the interpretation of scripture, Augustine and Spinoza. Todorov has contrasted Augustine's dogmatic perspective, in which the end result (equivalent with Christian doctrine), is given in advance, and the only question is the path or way to get there, with Spinoza's, in which it is the path or method that is given in advance (a method that does not differ from the interpretation of nature), and the end result or the meaning that is in question. The establishment of this meaning has to be carried out independently of any reference to the truth of the text. Todorov's contrast has a certain legitimacy, particularly to the extent that Spinoza inaugurates the modern historico-critical approach to biblical study when he proposes understanding as the result of a methodical and critical effort. Yet such a trajectory from medieval dogmatism to Spinoza's proto-Enlightenment position also occludes what Gadamer calls the dogmatic basis for this kind of position, namely, the belief in reason. How close indeed is Spinoza to the contemporary interpreter of scripture, especially to one who is interested in literary textuality? What would it mean to look for resources in Augustine beyond the onto-theological tradition? The seminar seeks throughout to make explicit the implicit assumptions about the hermeneutical task underlying particular interpretations of scripture, including our own.

Texts include: Augustine, Confessions, Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, Spinoza, Treatise on the Reform of the Understanding, Spinoza, Theologico-Political Treatise. Supplementary readings by Ricoeur, Bultmann, Dil

RLTS 710 000: Theological Argument and the Use of Scripture

Ian McFarland

Tuesdays, 9:00 – 12:00

This course is designed to provide an overview of some of the basic issues connected with the construction of Christian theological argument, with special attention given to the various ways in which theologians have deployed the Bible in order to sustain particular theological positions. The course will examine a range of writers from the patristic age to the present to examine: 1) basic approaches to theological reasoning; 2) interpretations of the nature of Scripture; and 3) examples of Scripture's deployment in theological argument. Through the successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- describe and reflect critically on the understanding of theological argument found in the Anselm's *Proslogion*, Newman's *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, and Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*
- describe and assess some of the major hermeneutical trends in the history of Christian use of the Bible in theology
- describe and assess of a range of classical and contemporary Christian approaches to the use of the Bible in developing Christology and the doctrine of creation
- explain how social and cultural contexts have contributed to the diversity of Christian perspectives on the theological use of the Bible have developed
- parse the use of Scripture in a theological argument in terms of the analytical framework presented in S. Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument*

The knowledge gained in this course is intended to provide a basis for further thinking on the relationship between biblical scholarship and theological argument at an advanced level. The course also covers a range of texts included on the method and content comprehensive examinations for Theological Studies.

RLTS 710 001 Race and Political Theology

(cross-listed with ILA 790)

Vincent Lloyd

Tuesdays, 1:00-4:00

Content: This course will explore the relevance of political theology, as it is understood both in the humanities and in theology, for addressing questions of race. Recent conversations about political theology have suggested deeper connections between religious and political concepts than previously acknowledged, and have questioned how dogmatic secularism obscures. What does a "secular" or a "post-secular" reading of historical and literary texts about race look like? Have questions of race always intertwined the religious and the political, even if this has been overlooked in recent scholarship? After introducing key concepts and techniques, we will closely read a series of historical and literary texts, exploring the political theological readings of others and offering such readings ourselves.

Texts Include:

Theoretical: Selections from Carl Schmitt, Gil Anidjar, J. Kameron Carter, Lewis Gordon, Saba Mahmood, Willie James Jennings, George Shulman, Eddie Glaude, and Jared Hickman
Literary: Richard Wright, *Black Boy*; James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*; Audre Lorde, *Zami*; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*; Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Particulars: The course will be conducted as a seminar. There will be a final 20pp paper and weekly reading responses.

RLTS 740: Phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion (cross-listed with CPLT 751 and French 780)

Professor Andrea White

Wednesdays, 1:00-4:00 pm

Jean-Luc Marion (1946-), an historian of modern philosophy, phenomenologist and a philosopher of religion, “has secured his place among the top rank of twentieth-century philosophers.” Scholars of French phenomenology, literature and theology will find his work in the philosophy of disclosure compelling as he rethinks the nature of selfhood and the human-divine relation. His philosophy of the third way revises, redirects and goes beyond metaphysics, onto-theology and Husserlian phenomenology to offer a philosophy of givenness, a phenomenology of revelation and the erotic reduction. The course will investigate the relationship between deconstruction and phenomenology as it examines Marion’s phenomenology of love as a critique of Levinasian ethics and his philosophy of givenness as a critique of Derrida’s economy of the gift. The course will address Marion’s phenomenology of the other along with its accompanying questions of intersubjectivity, the flesh that eludes all relation, and the saturated phenomenon in all its everydayness. The course will explore the themes of givenness and God and the “counter-experiences” of gift, excess and love. A study of Marion’s major works will give special consideration to the relationship between discourses of phenomenology and theology: theology at the limits of phenomenology; the possibility of “religion without religion” that does not reduce religion to ethics (as in Kant, Levinas and Derrida); the question of God and the so-called “theological turn” in French phenomenology; and the “postmetaphysical” critique in postmodern religious thought.